

Stair Glide Increases a Mother's Independence

Amber Watson is a 29-year-old stay-at-home mom of two and a substitute teacher for Kearney Public Schools. In 2003, Amber was pregnant with her first child and working two jobs. She had just started working her first job in the classroom, and was finishing her last shifts at Amigo's. Amber was on her way to Amigo's when she lost control of her vehicle on a county road resulting in paralysis from the waist down.

During Amber's two month stay at Madonna, she worked on building her upper body strength and learned how to complete straight across transfers. At this time Amber also learned about the Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP), and her therapist encouraged her to contact the Partnership.

When it was time to leave Madonna, Amber knew exactly what she could do and what she couldn't do. She had gained some strength in her upper body with the ability to lift seven pounds, and she mastered her parallel (straight across) transfers. However, Amber could not jump up and down curbs in her wheelchair and she was concerned about pivot transfers. Amber also faced morning sickness and was scared she wouldn't be able to lift her baby when he or she was born.

Once home, Amber said one of the



ABOVE: AMBER UTILIZES THE STAIR GLIDE. RIGHT: AMBER USES A TRANSFER BOARD TO MOVE HERSELF FROM HER WHEELCHAIR ONTO THE CHAIR OF THE STAIR GLIDE.



At this time, ATP technology Specialist Roxanne Rowley met with Amber and her husband to discuss home and vehicle modifications. Roxanne helped acquire vendor quotes for Amber's vehicle solutions and provided entrance and bathroom assessments and solutions.

In 2009, Amber contacted the Partnership to request access to her basement. At the time of her request, she was pregnant with her second child. Amber needed access to the bedroom of her first-born child in the basement to function as a homemaker/mother and a teacher, which made her eligible for Vocational

Rehabilitation (VR) Part B funding available at that time.

When Georgia Byrn, ATP Technology Specialist, visited with Amber in 2009, she learned that Amber has good upper body strength and is able to transfer independently, therefore a stair lift to the basement was recommended. Georgia said, "As a mother and grandmother, I knew it was necessary that Amber be able to access

her child in the event of an emergency, during times of discipline, and for assisting her son in daily routines."

"The lift will also increase her independence outside of the home," Georgia continued. "I am glad that this project worked for Amber, as this stair lift will certainly help her get to her job and other activities outside the home in

It is very rare for access to a basement to be considered appropriate justification of funds. Appropriate Examples For VR Part B Funding:

- *Only access to an accessible bathroom or entrance*
- *Access to a bedroom*
- *A caretaker's need to access children or family member*

biggest challenges for her was not being able to go into people's houses, "I am a very social person," she said. Furthermore, her family always wanted to help her do things, and in order for her to gain strength and become independent she had to do things herself and develop a strategy that would give her confidence to explore new places on her own.

SEE MOTHER, PAGE 4.

AT4ALL TECHNOLOGY HIGHLIGHT

The iPod Touches are growing in popularity for accommodating students with disabilities in the K-12 setting because of its small size and its cool factor. Plus, teachers are using and supporting the use of iPod touches because there are many education applications available to download.

Applications range from reading stories, solving math problems, phonics, counting change, telling time, flashcards and history. These applications help with lesson reinforcement and support classroom training. In addition, the iPods portability helps teachers use them when preparing for and administering tests and utilizing the text-to-speech function for books.

For schools that are just starting to utilize these technologies or are considering using them, Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) Education Technology Specialist, Lenette Sprunk, said it is important for schools to have procedures in place for checking technology in and out and plans on how to remain in control of application downloads.

It is also important to remember that the iPod touch may not be the best solution for all students. Like all assistive technology, every student's need is different, Lenette said. The student's cognitive level, vision, etc. need to be considered.

Other popular devices include:

- Livescribe Pulse Smartpen (records and syncs audio with whatever you write for later use),
- Intel Reader (high-resolution camera with a processor that converts printed text to digital text, then reads it aloud), the
- Kindle (lightweight eReader now with text-to-speech for some publications), and the
- iPad (a 9.7 inch tablet computer with multi-touch capability and runs both iPhone and iPod applications plus others specific to the iPad).

For more information on iPod touches or to find an educational technology specialist in your area, visit www.atp.ne.gov and click on the link "Contact ATP," there you will find a link to the "Educational Services Area Map."

AT4ALL FEATURE HIGHLIGHT

Expanded Search features at AT4ALL.COM now include sorting by zip code, city, price and more. For example, with one click a search for "wheeled walker" in Nebraska found 159 items. Of the 170 items found, the Expanded search FEATURES indicated that seven were free, 163 were available for loan, and in what programs!

Mullen

Seven-year-old Gracie Hoyt was born in 2002 with orthopedic impairments (shortened arms and malformed hands).

In 2005, Gracie was becoming old enough to use the standard toilet by herself, get in and out of the tub, and brush her own teeth and hair. However, several challenges such as getting into and out of the tub and balancing on the toilet prevented Gracie from safely and independently toileting, bathing and providing personal hygiene.

At this time, Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) Technology Specialist Donna Buschkoetter visited with Gracie and her family to address the challenges, and several devices were funded by the Disabled Children's Program (DCP) of the Health and Human Services System (HHSS) (grab bars around the toilet, a safety handle on the tub, a single-lever faucet on the lavatory, and modular bath steps).

When Gracie started school, she encountered similar challenges, such as toileting, hand washing and accessing the water fountain. These are challenges Gracie's mother Denise Hoyt took very seriously, and she admitted that it was very hard for her to let Gracie go to school when Gracie reached school age. She said at times Gracie wouldn't drink or go to the bathroom because Gracie is very particular about whom she accepts help from.

With each grade came additional challenges. In the classroom students utilized desks with lifting desktops for storing and accessing individual school supplies. The first solution for Gracie involved attaching a mechanism to the desk that would close the desktop slowly once it was propped





Public School Student Adapts to Second Grade

open. The second solution was allowing Gracie to utilize one of the upper-grade desks with an opening in the front.

Writing was also a challenge. In order to position her body and the pen so she could write, Gracie was lying on the paper she needed to be



TOP: GRACIE SITS AT HER DESK BEHIND A SLANTED DESKTOP THAT WAS BUILT BY MARK FOR GRACIE'S USE IN THE CLASSROOM. BOTTOM LEFT: THANKS TO MARK AND JEFF THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE HAS CUSTOMIZED, CURVED HANDRAILS. BOTTOM RIGHT: GRACIE ENJOYS USING THE SLIDE THAT SHE IS NOW ABLE TO ACCESS, WHILE SECOND GRADE TEACHER MARGARET MARKS WATCHES.

with Jeff Hoesing's, Superintendent and Elementary Principal for Mullen Public Schools, and Head of Maintenance Mark Ewoldt's abilities to customize solutions to meet his school's needs and support the local businesses.

Lilly helped Jeff most recently when the school purchased extra playground components that would increase Gracie's and all the students' accessibility to the playground. There was a portion (or tower) of the playground, including a slide that Gracie and others were unable to access due to how children got from one tower to the next. Jeff said he wanted Gracie to be able to access all the towers.

Jeff and Mark put a lot of work into each project so it was right for every child, Denise said. "Gracie loves the new slide. She uses it constantly. It not only benefits Gracie, but all the younger students that couldn't use it."



able to see and access. Her reach was very limited, so a specialized, slanted desktop was built.

This year Gracie is in the second grade classroom, where students are learning how to use the computers. Much like accessing paper for writing, Gracie had a hard time typing as she was lying on the keypad to reach the keys. The current solution is angling the keyboard, but Gracie is still slow at typing. Denise looks forward to exploring other classroom

solutions in the future.

From desk modifications to accessible bathroom solutions, the Mullen school's staff have been great people to work with as they put a lot of thought into project adaptations and drawings, Denise said. "The school has done a fantastic job with Gracie's desk accommodations, and the custodian has done a great job. He built the desktop."

Lilly Blase, ATP Program Coordinator has worked with Mullen Public Schools on a number of accessibility projects and was impressed

FOR INFORMATION ON ATP'S HOW DID WE DO SURVEY FOR PROJECTS FUNDED BY HHSS, SEE PAGE 4.

2009 PROJECTS FUNDED BY HHSS - HOW DID WE DO SURVEY

714 Surveys Mailed • 332 Surveys Returned • Return Rate 47%

Question	Yes	No	No Response
Were you included in the decision of what home modifications/ assistive technology would work best for you?	98%	1%	1%
Were your questions about home modifications/ assistive technology answered?	98%	1%	1%
Are you using the home modifications/assistive technology you received?	97%	1%	2%
Do you know how to use the home modifications/ assistive technology you received?	98%	1%	1%

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MOTHER, FROM PAGE 1.

a timely manner so she can continue to contribute to her community as a teacher and in other capacities.”

Through various state and national organizations, Amber has found opportunities to network with other women and moms with disabilities, and realized there are activities of daily living that people struggle with that she wouldn't have ever thought about before. Amber said she is happy with the services provided by ATP and is impressed with the resources and services available for a wide range of abilities and disabilities that ATP can provide for others.

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